

## Roger Brooke Taney to Andrew Jackson, April 24, 1841, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### MEMORANDUM IN JACKSON'S HANDWRITING.

[January 29, 1830.]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The date is not given in any of the several copies of this paper—not all of which are alike—that exist in the Jackson MSS.; but it seems to have been Jan. 29, 1830. Van Buren says in his *Autobiography* (p. 355) that Jackson on Jan. 25, or at least before the 27th, showed him a paper containing the basis of a statement he intended to make to Ingham, Branch, and Berrien. He, Van Buren, suggested that it be revised to make it clear that Jackson did not mean to interfere with the domestic affairs of his Cabinet. He adds that it was arranged that R. M. Johnson, of Kentucky, should see the three gentlemen and give them an idea of what Jackson would say in the coming interview, thinking that the Kentuckian might be able to put them into a state of mind favorable to a good understanding. Testimony varies as to what happened in the interview. Jackson said in a letter to Eaton, July 19, 1830, that the statement was read to the three officials. In their published statement ( *Niles' Register*, XL. 383, 384, 426) they denied that they saw any paper. The form used here is slightly longer than that used in the editor's *Jackson*, II. 467.

Having been informed by several members of Congress that there were a combination entered into by three of the heads of Departments with a foreign Lady to drive major Eaton and his family out of society and by that means coerce me to dismiss him from my Cabinet, This has been reiterated by [ *blank* ] members of Congress to me, after the plan had been adopted, (which was to make parties, first by the Foreign lady, then by Mr Ingham, Branch and Berrien, and not to invite major Eaton and his family) The

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parties as reported, had been given, and major Eaton and his family not invited, as had been predicted. Several members came to me and after reporting these facts, asked if I intended to permit such indignity to be offered to me unnoticed. I assured them I would not, and that I would call for explanations from them. I therefore sent and had a personal interview with those gentlemen. I informed them of the information I had recd. of the combination, from the members of congress, and the plan having been carried into execution and I had sent for them for explanation and inquiry whether the information I had recd was correct, If so, then was the course pursued by them (mr Ingham mr Branch and Berrien) to major Eaton and his family were [sic] not only unjust in itself, but highly disrespectful to me and well calculated to destroy the Harmony of my Cabinet.<sup>2</sup> The ground upon which this opinion is founded are substantially these. I do not claim the right to interfere in any manner in the domestic relations or personal intercourse of any member of my Cabinet, nor have I ever in any manner attempted it. But from information and my own observation on the general course of events, I am fully impressed with a belief that you and your families have, in addition to the exercise of your and their own undoubted rights in this respect taken measures to induce others to avoid intercourse with mrs Eaton and thereby sought to exclude her from society and degrade him. It is impossible for me upon the fullest and most mature and dispasionate consideration of the subject to regard this course in any other light than a wanton disregard of my feelings and reproof of my official conduct, It is I, that without any solicitation or desire on his part called major Eaton into my cabinet, and it is I, that with the fullest conviction of the

<sup>2</sup> Here in the margin, in Jackson's handwriting, is written: "The following was read to them from a paper held in my hand."

injustice of the imputations which as I firmly believe malice and envy have cast upon his wife continue him there. If her character is such as to justify active measures on the part of my cabinet to exclude her from virtuous society, it is I who am responsible to the community for this alledged indignity to public morales. I will not part with major Eaton from

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my cabinet, and those of my cabinet who cannot harmonise with him had better withdraw for harmony I must and will have.

It is vain for me to disguise the true aspect of the question, and it is not in my nature to do so if I could; nor can I consent to harbour any feelings toward those with whom I am acting daily without distinctly expressing and apprising them of those opinions—my whole life has been at variance with such a course, and I am too old to practice it now, I must cease to respect myself when find myself capable of it—therefore have sought this interview, to assure you if there is any truth in the report that you have entered into the combination charged, to drive major Eaton from my cabinet, that I feel it an indignity and insult offered to myself, and is of a character that will remain hereafter to be considered of.

The Gentlemen substantially replied that they would be the last men to do any act to injure the feelings or character of major Eaton and his family, that the parties given had no such thing in view—that they could not undertake to controule their families etc. etc. etc. I protested against any such wish to controule society in their intercourse but observed, that as they had disavowed any intention to wound the feelings of major Eaton etc. etc. I was bound to believe them—but the rumor had went forth, it was believed by part of the community that it was intended to degrade Eaton etc. and the effect upon Eaton and the indignity to me in the minds that believed it, were the same, and hereafter it would be well so conduct as not to give room to the world so to construe your conduct—for I had again to repeat, that having brought major Eaton into my cabinet I would not part with him, and any attempt to degrade him I viewed, and should continue to view, as an indignity to myself, that as all had come into my cabinet harmoniously, and friendly, that that harmony must be continued, or those who could not harmonise, had better withdraw. That harmony must be maintained. They replied that nothing on their part should be done to destroy the harmony of the cabinet (how far these three Gentlemen complied with this promise the public will judge. The above is taken from a paper held in my hand and read to them and their reply noted with my conversation with them after the[y] retired)3

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3 This letter is filed in the Jackson MSS., vol. 77, as in April, 1831.